

## **Executive Summary**

### **Health Care Financing Administration National Medicare Education Program Task Force Meeting Washington, D.C.**

**November 10, 1999**

A meeting of the Health Care Financing Administration's (HCFA) National Medicare Education Program (NMEP) Task Force was held on Wednesday, November 10, 1999, from 9 a.m. to noon at the Loews L'Enfant Plaza Hotel in Washington, D.C. A list of attendees is provided in Attachment A.

### **Meeting Topics and Synopsis**

#### *Welcome and Introductions—Carol Cronin*

Ms. Cronin welcomed the Task Force members, reviewed the agenda, and then asked members to introduce themselves.

Eric Katz gave a brief overview of the meeting handouts, which included the revised NMEP Partners Kit and the Media Kit. Through a partnership with the American Library Association (ALA), the *Medicare & You Library Edition* are being sent to 16,000 libraries around the country. Attendees were encouraged to contact their account representatives to discuss ways to strengthen collaborations.

#### *NMEP Update—Carol Cronin*

##### *Medicare & You 2000 Handbook*

Ms. Cronin announced that all the *Medicare & You* handbooks were mailed and should have been received between September 15 and October 15, which were the target dates. The involvement of the U.S. Postal Service early in the process made this possible. Other versions of the handbook are available as follows:

- English and Spanish (in Puerto Rico and upon request)
- Large print (18-point font) and audiotapes in English and Spanish
- 26 versions distributed nationally by State and region.

About 17 million handbooks contained postcards that asked beneficiaries for their reaction to the handbook. To date, between 20,000 and 30,000 have been returned, and a preliminary review suggests positive results.

## **Medicare Choices Helpline (1-800-MEDICARE)**

The phone center received about 5,000 calls a week from March through September. The numbers of calls have climbed steadily to more than 100,000 through early November. Additional phone center reports include the following:

- The average call time is about 5.5 minutes.
- The States generating the most calls are Florida, New York, and California.
- The five most frequently asked questions (also noted on the Medicare.gov Web site) are:

- % What does Medicare Part B not pay for?
- % What does it cost to have a mammogram?
- % What types of services are covered under Part A and Part B?
- % What is Medicaid and what does it cover?
- % What options are available if my plan does not renew?

## **www.Medicare.gov**

The Medicare Web site, [www.Medicare.gov](http://www.Medicare.gov), had more than 1 million page views, or more than 6 million hits, last month. Nursing Home Compare and Medicare Compare were the most viewed pages.

## **Regional Education About Choices in Health (REACH)**

The REACH campaign has implemented more than 1,300 planned activities across the country through the Regional Offices and partners. The top three-planned outreach activities are:

- Presentations
- Public meetings
- Health Fairs

## **Medigap Compare**

A description of Medigap Compare was made available on the Medicare.gov Web site. More information will be available by the end of the year.

## **Consumer Assessment of Health Plan Survey (CAHPS)**

The survey is in its third year with about 216,000 beneficiaries being sent questionnaires in early September. By early October, there had been more than 105,000 responses. Follow-up to increase the response rate will run through December.

### ***Medicare & You Publicity and Promotion Campaign—Jenny Dobbin***

Ms. Dobbin explained that HCFA is developing a new promotion and publicity department. As interim promotion and publicity director, she has developed an organizational design and implementation plan. As part of the plan, promotion and publicity activities have been centered on the four communications vehicles designated by the Balanced Budget Act:

- Web site
- Toll-free line
- Regional outreach activities
- Handbook.

The *Medicare & You* handbook launch included:

- Production of 39 million handbooks
- Media briefings
- Media interviews
- Distribution of 3,000 media kits and follow-up phone calls
- “Seniors Surf the Web” library events held across the Nation in collaboration with the ALA and the USDA 4-H Clubs.

The next steps include getting more partners involved. A communications plan is being developed to share information and coordinate activities. Also, attempts are being made to put a Medicare & You Day on the National Calendar for May.

### ***Disenrollment Rates—Tom Reilly***

Dr. Reilly presented survey results providing the reasons for disenrollment along with the disenrollment rates. In addition, different formulas for calculating disenrollment rates are being compared to determine which would be most helpful to the consumer. Dr. Reilly made the following points about current disenrollment rates used by HEDIS:

- The HEDIS rate was intended to provide an indicator of stability of enrollment rather than to provide consumer information.
- The HEDIS rate includes involuntary disenrollment, such as those resulting from death or relocating.
- The HEDIS rate does not include those who enter and leave the plan during the year.

The new rate will try to measure voluntary disenrollment; the next steps include:

- Obtaining input in November 1999
- Generating disenrollment rates by the end of December 1999
- Testing language with consumers in November and December
- Reporting 1998 rates in a static file in February.

Dr. Reilly described the survey of disenrollees as follows:

- The survey will be conducted separately from the CAHPS.
- Mail with phone follow-up will be used.
- The survey will be conducted quarterly and reported annually.
- Rates will be available by June 2001.
- Eventually, standard disenrollment forms will be developed to collect data.
- The goal is to have at least 150 completed disenrollment surveys per plan to address small sample problems.
- In the future, there may be surveys of grievances and appeals.

***U.S. Department of Agriculture 4-H Youth Technology Team Project—Tom Tate***

Mr. Tate explained that the 4-H Youth Technology Team Project is part of the USDA Intergenerational Partnership that brings youth and older adults together through community service to introduce seniors to technology.

- In Spring 1999 HCFA teamed with USDA to introduce HCFA's Internet site to seniors.
- 4-H youth conducted hands-on workshops for older adults from Maryland and Virginia.
- Based on the success of the new model, additional workshops were conducted in libraries and other venues throughout the test area.
- Interest in the program grew, and youth in Connecticut, Florida, and Washington State picked up the model and shared it in their communities.

A July 2000 conference is being planned to teach people how to develop these workshops in their communities. A curriculum will be developed to assist with the design of a model. The University of Vermont is collecting data for a formal evaluation of the program.

***Caregiver Initiative—Gail Gibson Hunt***

Ms. Gibson described the Caregiver Initiative, a task force of 22 national groups working to get information about health issues and Medicare to family caregivers. The task force is seeking assistance in identifying issues and planning activities for outreach and product distribution.

***Consumer Education on Y2K in the Medicare Program—Lis Handley***

Ms. Handley explained that HCFA is Y2K ready. Starting in March, HCFA began data collection to assist in addressing concerns that beneficiaries may have about Y2K. Results of the survey Medicare beneficiaries have:

- High awareness of and exposure to Y2K
- Overall low concern about Y2K
- Health care worries ranking lower than other Y2K problems
- Not too concerned that beneficiaries will be denied access to health care
- Y2K considered most likely to affect billing
- Providers not expected to refuse service
- Minimal intention to take action for Y2K and health
- HCFA's messages well received by beneficiaries.

HCFA's preparing communications products to inform and reassure beneficiaries. These include:

- Providing 1-800-MEDICARE customer service representatives with beneficiary Qs & As
- General brochure for Medicare beneficiaries on Y2K readiness
- C End stage renal disease brochure on emergency preparedness
- C Loading beneficiary friendly Qs & As on Medicare.gov
- C Preparing HCFA staff speaker's kits
- C Mention of Medicare readiness in Social Security Administration check stuffer
- C Information in *Medicare & You* 2000 Handbook

Advertisements have been placed in the *Wall Street Journal* health pages in November outlining what health service providers need to do to get paid for services in Y2K. Advertisements targeting bill submitters (vendors) will also appear in November.

### ***Open Discussion of Partner Activities—All Participants***

- New York City Better Business Bureau (BBB) recently received funding to prepare and disseminate Medicare HMO, Medigap and Home Health information to BBB's nationally for distribution to local member companies.
- **Indian Health Service** has identified regional staff members to work with Native Americans on Medicare outreach and education.
- **SPRY Foundation** hosted a national teleconference on November 15 for local staff interested in learning more about the Medicare information resources available to them.
- **Social Security Administration** is working to give its 64,000 employees Intranet access to Medicare publications.

### ***Suggested Topics for Next Meeting—All Participants***

The suggested topics for the next meeting include:

- List of outreach activities
- REACH activities and products posted on the Web site
- HCFA resources that would be helpful to partners in outreach activities
- List of partners Web sites.

**National Medicare Education Program  
Task Force Meeting  
Loews L'Enfant Plaza Hotel  
Washington, D.C.  
November 10, 1999**

**Attachment A: List of Attendees**

**Cooperative State Research Education  
and Extension Service,  
U.S. Department of Agriculture**  
Mr. Tom Tate

**IQ Solutions, Inc.**

- Ms. Sherry Hicks
- Ms. Jennifer Isenberg

**Indian Health Service**  
Mr. Harry Rosenzweig

**Health Care Financing Administration**

- Ms. Carol Cronin
- Ms. Jenny Dobbin
- Ms. Lorna Evans
- Ms. Lis Handley
- Ms. Rena Judy
- Mr. Eric Katz
- Ms. Harriet Kelman
- Mr. Tom Reilly
- Mr. Spencer Schron
- Mr. Joe Slattery

**LTV Steel Company, Inc.**  
Mr. Russ Lloyd

**National Alliance for Caregiving**  
Ms. Gail Gibson Hunt

**National Association for Manufacturers**  
Ms. Sharon Canner

**Social Security Administration**  
Ms. Martha Brunner

**SPRY Foundation**  
Ms. Elysa Darling

**Invited Guests**

- John Cutler\*  
U.S. Department of Health  
and Human Services
- Rebecca LeBuhn\*  
Citizen Advocacy Center